



# VIRGIN ATLANTIC MARKS DOUBLE CELEBRATION AS ITS NEW A330NEO TOUCHES DOWN IN TAMPA BAY

News / Airlines



**Sir Richard Branson has touched down in Tampa Bay for the first time this afternoon on Virgin Atlantic inaugural A330neo flight. The flight was also welcomed by the Mayor of Tampa Jane Castor and CEO of Tampa Airport Joe Lopano, alongside representatives from Visit Tampa Bay and Visit St Pete Clearwater, marking the regions first ever direct services to London Heathrow.**

**The new Airbus A330neo, named Billie Holiday, flew over a delegation of VIPs, including the airline's CEO Shai Weiss. On board, guests were treated to an array of the region's famous cuisine including Cuban sandwiches, key lime pies and Two Tribes Floridian beers. In a nod to the city's world class sports teams, Sir Richard Branson and Shai Weiss donned the sports jerseys of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the Tampa Bay Lightning, as they posed for photographs alongside the airline's world-famous cabin crew.**

The new year-round Florida service will initially fly four times a week before increasing to daily from 28th November, complementing the airline's flights to Miami and Orlando. This latest addition follows the airline's launch of direct flights between London and Austin, Texas in May 2022, cementing the USA as Virgin Atlantic's heartland. The airline's expanded joint venture with Delta Air Lines and Air France-KLM means customers across the US and Europe will be able to connect seamlessly onto the new service via Heathrow.

Tampa Bay will be one of the first destinations to experience Virgin Atlantic's brand-new Airbus A330neo which is designed to provide a premium, personalised experience for every single customer. The airline's Upper Class cabin boasts a brand new seat, evolution of its iconic social space and the unveiling of The Retreat Suite, the most spacious suite in Virgin Atlantic's history.

**Sir Richard Branson, President of Virgin Atlantic and Founder of Virgin Group said:**"We have double the reasons to celebrate today as we fly our brand-new plane into our latest destination – Tampa Bay. I can't think of a better way to mark our arrival into this incredible region than by giving passengers the best start to their journeys on our new A330neo. Tampa Bay has it all; a year-round warm climate, vibrant nightlife, endless attractions and of course some of the world's best beaches in St Pete and Clearwater. Combined with its emerging entrepreneurial mindset, the region simply makes sense for Virgin Atlantic and I can't wait for our customers to experience all it has to offer."



**Shai Weiss, CEO at Virgin Atlantic commented:** "Today is a significant milestone in Virgin Atlantic's continued growth, as we get back to our best for our customers and people. The USA is our heartland and Florida has an important role in our American portfolio, so I'm delighted to be bolstering connectivity to the region with the only direct flight to London Heathrow. It's also fitting that our new route will enjoy our newest aircraft, the A330neo. This plane has evolved our customer experience, with every traveller receiving a premium experience regardless of the cabin they travel in. It also plays a significant role in our multi billion dollar fleet transformation, demonstrating our commitment to the planet. We know the most impactful thing we can do as an airline is to fly the cleanest, greenest, youngest fleet possible and the A330neo is integral to achieving this goal."

**Joe Lopano, CEO Tampa International Airport, commented:** "Tampa International Airport is delighted to partner with Virgin Atlantic for nonstop service to a world-class destination like London-Heathrow. This route will give our passengers another premier overseas option for both business and leisure, aboard an aircraft that reflects TPA's commitment to cutting-edge innovation and unparalleled service. We're excited to support Virgin Atlantic's continued growth here for many years to come."

**Santiago C. Corrada, President and CEO of Visit Tampa Bay commented:** "Today is an

exciting day for the Tampa Bay region and shows the strength of the partnership between Visit Tampa Bay, Visit St. Pete Clearwater and Tampa International Airport. Virgin Atlantic is the perfect partner not only for its high quality and fun product offering but they also share our focus on diversity and inclusion. We are looking forward to welcoming even more international travellers from across the UK and Europe into the region to see everything we have to offer from our wide range of hotels, Michelin recommended restaurants and stellar attractions. Tampa Bay is a premiere destination and we are excited about the opportunities the new service with this industry-leading airline will bring. We very much welcome Sir Richard Branson, all of his team and the VIP media and guests on today's flight to the area."

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